

# **A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus**

## **The Bread of Life**

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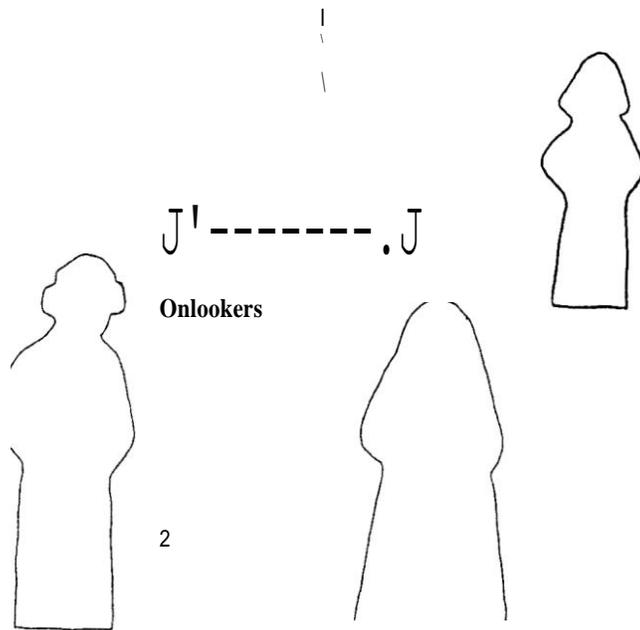
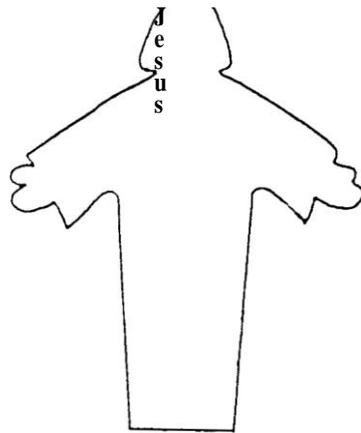
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## **THE BREAD OF LIFE ... MATERIALS**

-medium wicker basket to hold:

- wooden Jesus figure
- four wooden onlooker figures
- bread of life card



## THE BREAD OF LIFE ... JOHN 6:22-51

### ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story basket from the shelf and return to the circle.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Jesus figure toward at the center of the storytelling area.

Rest your hand lightly on the Jesus figure.

Emphasize the number "5000" as you speak.

Move the onlookers in a couple of directions and then place them by Jesus.

Touch one of the onlookers as you speak.

Shake your head as you speak. Then touch each of the onlookers.

Rest your hand on Jesus and speak softly and slowly.

Touch one of the onlookers.

Move Jesus slightly closer to the onlookers.

### \WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make it your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I will find all the words to this story of God's people.

Jesus spent much of his time on earth helping people understand who he was.

When they wondered if Jesus was really the Savior, the Messiah he told them about himself in different ways.

One day Jesus fed 5000 people with the food from a child's lunch.

The next day the people wanted to be with Jesus again. They looked until they found him in Capernaum.

They asked Jesus, "Teacher, when did you get here?"

Jesus said, "You are not looking for me because you saw miracles. You are looking for me because you ate all the food you wanted."

Then Jesus said, "Don't work for food that gets rotten. Work for food that gives you eternal life. The Son of Man will give you this food, because God has given him the right to do so"

The people asked, "What exactly does God want us to do?"

"God wants you to have faith in the one God sent," said Jesus.

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Touch one onlooker as you speak the first sentence. Then touch the second as you finish.

Touch the third onlooker as you speak.

Shake your head as you speak of Moses. Then lift your hand, palm up to indicate bread from heaven.

Move your lifted hand down to rest on the Jesus figure.

Touch each of the figures as you speak.

Place the bread card in front of the figures so it is closest to the children.

Touch the Jesus figure as you speak.

Touch each of the onlooker figures.

Nod your head as you speak.

Lift both hands, palms up, and shrug your shoulders as though you're not sure.

Touch the Jesus figure and speak with conviction.

They replied, "What miracle will you do so we will have faith in you? We know when our ancestors were in the desert, they were given manna to eat.

Our scriptures say, 'God gave them bread from heaven to eat. '"

Jesus answered them, "You need to know that Moses wasn't the one who gave the bread from heaven. God gives the true bread from heaven.

The bread that God gives is the person who came down from heaven to give life to the world."

Then the people said, "Lord, give us this bread and don't ever stop!"

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread that gives life. No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. No one who has faith in me will ever be thirsty."

Then Jesus told the people that he had come to earth to do what God wanted him to do.

Jesus reminded the people that God wanted all the people to be with God when they died.

Jesus said that if they all had faith in him, God would give them eternal life.

Many of the people didn't know if they should believe Jesus. They thought he was just a carpenter's son, not God's son.

But Jesus told them, "I have seen God. And if you have faith in me you will have eternal life. "

First touch the Jesus figure, then touch one of the onlooker figures.

Rest your hand on the "bread" card.

Touch two of the onlookers as you speak.

Place all the wooden figures in the basket one at a time.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Dismiss the children when everyone has had a chance to choose his/her work.

Jesus continued, "I am bread that gives life forever. Your ancestors ate the manna bread in the wilderness, but eventually they died.

But the bread from heaven gives you life forever. I am that bread"

Some of the people, even the disciples, thought this was too hard to understand.

### WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder if the people knew Jesus was talking about himself as bread?

I wonder how the people thought they were supposed to eat Jesus for bread?

I wonder what Jesus meant when he said, "You will never die"?

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's begin.

## THE BREAD OF LIFE ... TEACHER HELPS

The gospel of John is a different gospel than the other three: Matthew, Mark and Luke. The first three gospels focus a great deal on the stories about Jesus and the stories Jesus told. But, for the most part, they do not have lengthy speeches by Jesus talking about himself, or the kingdom or his relationship with God. The gospel of John seems to focus a great deal more on explanations about who Jesus is and what his task is on earth. In the gospel of John the miracles are "signs" pointing to the Messianic divinity of Jesus. In John, Jesus often does things "so the scriptures will be fulfilled." It is obvious that the author is determined to help the audience understand that Jesus IS the son of God and the purpose of all his special actions point to that reality.

It is important to remember where this story is located in the Bible. The day before our story, Jesus fed 5000 people from a child's lunch. People who were hungry had been fed and they were not likely to forget that experience. Having one experience of Jesus was not enough, and perhaps it never is enough. So they tried to find him. When they finally located Jesus, their first question was "When did you get here?" Jesus immediate response may seem harsh to us. The question seems innocent enough. But Jesus jumped on the people, accusing them of looking for him only because they had been fed. His implication was that they found him only because they hoped he would give them food a second time.

Then follows what becomes a pattern in the gospel of John. The pattern is this; Jesus makes a statement, questions are asked, Jesus responds, some take exception, sometimes an argument ensues, accusations are made and Jesus reinforces or elaborates on his teaching. It is very obvious in this story that Jesus was speaking on a spiritual level that most of the people, including his disciples didn't understand. (Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible p. 717.) Jesus had hoped that his feeding of people the day before would be understood in a spiritual sense as well as a physical sense. Perhaps some of his frustration is because there was none of that understanding. (The New Bible Commentary Revised p. 943) The conversation moved to the manna of the Old Testament as the people asked for a sign. It is very typical of John to link Jesus ministry to the Old Testament, helping the people to understand that Jesus was a fulfillment of the Old Testament Covenant and not something separated from God's plan for God's people.

An often-missed teaching in this text is the notion about what we must do. The people asked Jesus what they had to do to get the bread of life. Jesus response was that they needed to believe in the one God sent. Grace is a powerful gift and there is nothing we can do to earn it. We simply must believe.

The first wondering question asks if the people knew that Jesus was talking about himself as the bread of life. These teachings from the gospel of John are not easy for concrete thinkers to understand. Because of that our wondering questions will be very basic in this unit. Most of the children will have picked up on the questions the people asked Jesus in the story that indicated their lack of understanding. So, most of them will probably say

"no" to this question. A few will believe that people just knew when they talked with Jesus, that he was whatever he said he was.

The second question gets to the heart of the concrete thinker's understanding. The children will struggle with the very teaching the people who came to Jesus were struggling with. If Jesus is the bread, how were they to eat of that bread? The best way to help little children understand this question is to have them talk about how they feel when they are with someone they really love, such as a parent or a good friend. When they are in the company of those people they feel happy, content or perhaps "full". To believe in Jesus is to feel "full" in our hearts. Though this feeling is a hard one to understand, your statement of this teaching will probably result in nodding heads. A few of the children may make the leap to the sacrament of Holy Communion. This is an easier way for children to understand the "living bread".

The final wondering question asks what it means to "never die"? Some of the children have had the teaching of eternal life before this. And although it is difficult, they may have some language to aid in their understanding. A sound way to help them understand eternal life is to talk about someone they remember who has died or even moved away. Then ask them what they remember. You can point out that as long as they keep that memory the person they miss is alive to them. God keeps us alive by keeping our souls; our memories, our thoughts our being, long after our bodies die.

#### **SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

Jesus told the people who came to find him that they had only come because he had fed them the day before. If you got free food when you attended an event would you want to go back? Would it matter if you were really hungry or not?

Jesus was talking about himself as living bread. What does that mean to you? Why is it such a hard concept for us to understand? Why do you think Jesus used bread as his illustration instead of some other food?

The people wanted to do whatever they needed to get the living bread. Jesus told them they had to believe. Which is harder for you? Is it harder to do certain things all the time to get the gift of eternal life or to believe that Jesus is the son of God and your savior?